



## ***Identity Theft Transcript***

*Welcome to Money Talks, a series of podcasts developed by Oklahoma Money Matters, the financial literacy initiative of the Oklahoma College Assistance Program and the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.*

Today's topic is protecting yourself from identity theft. In the next few minutes I'll share the importance of arming yourself against this threat and explore tips for safeguarding your information. Let's get started!

Did you know a growing number of identity theft victims are under age 30 and most are college students? Identity theft happens when someone uses your personal information, like your name, Social Security number or credit card information, without your knowledge to commit fraud or other crimes. If your identity is stolen, the thief could empty your bank account, max out your credit cards, apply for new credit or cash bad checks, all of which could ruin your credit. If that happens, it could take years to clear your good name.

Without realizing it, you may be doing things that make you more vulnerable to identity theft. Want to keep thieves at bay? Put these tips into practice!

- Be careful what you put online. Social networking sites are popular places to connect with friends, but beware what you share. Listing your birth date, address or even your mother's maiden name can give identity thieves important information.
- Keep your information safe. Store personal papers, like your birth certificate, Social Security card, transcripts or financial forms, in a fire-proof lock box. These are relatively inexpensive and are available from a variety of stores.
- Before you toss papers that include personal information, like ATM receipts, pay stubs, credit card offers or unused deposit slips, feed them through a cross-cut paper shredder. Like a lock box, a cross-cut shredder is easy to find and relatively inexpensive.

- When creating passwords, don't use obvious information like your birth date, name or phone number. Passwords with a mix of characters and numbers are harder to crack.
- Never carry your Social Security card in your purse or wallet, and don't use your Social Security number as an identification number or have it printed on your checks.
- Don't leave your checks, debit card or credit card lying around for people to see. If someone gets your account numbers, they can order new checks in their name or shop online with your card numbers. Remember - never attach your PIN number to your cards.
- Don't give out your personal information over the phone, through email or on the Internet unless you initiated the inquiry. Banks and credit card companies won't ask you to verify your information by email. Be skeptical of any attempt to verify your account information.
- Don't click on links sent in unsolicited e-mails. If you get an e-mail from your bank or another company, visit the website you typically use and log in to verify the request. Fake websites can be manipulated to look like the real thing.
- If you shop online, make sure the Web address starts with h t t p s. The "s" is very important; it – signifies that the site is secure. If you don't see the "s", don't shop on the site.
- Balance your bank statement and review your credit card bill regularly. Putting off tasks like these may allow identity theft to go undetected for a while.
- Keep an eye on your credit. Visit [www dot annual credit report dot com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com) to order a free credit report from each of the three largest consumer reporting agencies.

Above all else, be aware. That's the first step to being in control. By paying attention to your accounts and personal information, you're taking an active role in guarding yourself against would-be thieves.

*Thank you for joining us on Money Talks! If you'd like more money saving tips, check out our Web site, [Oklahoma money matters dot org](http://Oklahoma money matters dot org). Until next time, **make your money matter!***